



SUNSET MARCH

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Sunset March #1901 up to and including #2266



Acknowledgements:

This Annual Report was edited by the Sunset March Foundation.

Secretariat:

Sunset March Foundation,
c/o Dennenstraat 147,
6543 JR NIJMEGEN
The Netherlands

Editorial staff:

Kees Bleijerveld

Design:

Dirk-Jan van Zuidam

Photography:

Jaleesa Freelance Photographer

English translation:

Gabe van der Zwaag

Front page:

Notice board placed on the bridge in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic, from 19 March to 2 July and from 15 October in 2020.

Photography: Wim van Mierlo)

1. Introduction	3
2. What is the Sunset March?	4
3. The 2020 "Veterans of the Day"	7
4. Appreciation of our President	7
5. Sunset March Immaterial Heritage	8
6. 2020 Activities	8
7. 2020 Finances	11
8. 2021 Prospects	12



Sunset March Board, also known as Sunset March Team. (Photography: Sacha de Boer)

Left to right: Dirk-Jan van Zuidam, Henk Hanenburg, Rene Scheeres, Kees Bleijerveld, George de Jongh, Tim Ruijling, Wim van Mierlo, Wim van Zijl, Douwe Osinga.

All of them veterans

1. Introduction

In 2019 the 75th Anniversary of the Liberation was celebrated in Nijmegen region. The Sunset March experienced a wide variety of highlights in that respect, like the 75 special Sunset Marches, the publication of our book and of course the large number of over 7,500 people who took part in the Special Sunset March on 21 September 2019.

The year 2020 promised to become at least as special a year, for this year 75 years of Freedom were to be celebrated nationwide. By the end of 2019 preparations for a number of special Sunset March commemorative events were already in full swing.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 threw a spanner in the works. Many activities that had been planned for the celebration of 75 Years of Freedom had to be cancelled or did indeed take place after all, but in a strongly reduced form, however.

It stands to reason that COVID-19 highly affected the Sunset Marches as well. The daily Sunset March was performed as usual. Every day a veteran walks the track and the 48 lamp posts on the bridge are lit one after the other. The veteran then salutes in front of the commemorative monument.

The annual Commemoration of the Dead at the monument on 4 May and the "Waal Crossing" Commemoration on 20 September were held in a very austere way. Many groups that had intended to walk the Sunset March (some of them for a second time) cancelled their appointment. The 5 May Liberation Day was cancelled and so were the world-famous Nijmegen 4-Day Marches.

The traditional special Sunset March on the Monday preceding the 4-Day Marches had to be skipped as well.

During the first COVID-19 wave and during the second wave, the Sunset Marches were held "corona proof". Spontaneously following and joining the Veteran of the Day march is a very special aspect of the Sunset March.

Reluctantly the board had to request potential followers to refrain from marching along with the Veteran of the Day in these periods. During the partial lockdown from 15 October and the more extensive lockdown from 15 December, this policy will be in force, at least until the end of the present lockdown. Nijmegen Municipality placed a notice board to this end on the Oversteek Bridge. (Crossing Bridge).

The year 2020 was a very special year after all. Covid-19 had a great impact on all events concerning the Sunset March. In the Oversteek surroundings the present construction activities have changed the area completely. On the bridge itself the Sunset March has basically remained unchanged.

All 366 days a veteran marched the bridge at sunset at the pace of the street lights being lit one by one; in silence and in thoughts. He or she paid respects by saluting while standing in front of the Wall Crossing Monument. This is the basis of the Sunset Marches and this will remain unchanged.

2. What is the Sunset March?

Creation

Sunset March was initiated by a number of veterans from the Overbetuwe region (website: <http://www.veteranenoverbetuwe.nl/Home>). During a regular meeting of Veteranen Overbetuwe (Overbetuwe Veterans) on 27 September 2014 the plan was conceived to investigate the possibilities to use the "Lights Crossing" lights monument on the new city bridge "De Oversteek" in Nijmegen to create a lively daily tribute to our allied liberators. This initiative is aimed at paying homage to the American soldiers who sacrificed their lives for us. It was here that they fought for our freedom, far away from home.

It is also meant to build a visible bridge to all veterans who in worldwide missions contributed and still contribute to peace and security. Right from the start this idea was largely welcomed by many people and a website was devised to make this plan known to the public at large. On Sunday 19 October 2014 the first Sunset March was walked.

The five initiators of the very beginning are: Henk Hanenburg, Wim van Mierlo, Douwe Osinga, Tim Ruijling and Dirk-Jan van Zuidam. The Foundation Board was later extended with Kees Bleijerveld, George de Jongh, René Scheeres and Wim van Zijl. Since 11 November 2015 Sunset March has been a foundation with so-called cultural ANBI status. (In our country this officially recognized status gives tax deduction facilities to tax payers who donate to any organization working for public benefit).

How does it work?

Since 19 October 2014 the Sunset March has been a daily homage to the allied soldiers who fought for freedom of The Netherlands. In Nijmegen a new city bridge was constructed, called "De Oversteek" (The Crossing). It was built close to and across exactly the same section of the river Waal where on 20 September 1944 American soldiers of the US 82nd Airborne Division crossed this river to the north side of it.

This crossing is considered to be one of the most heroic actions of World War II and owes its fame partly to the well-known war film: "A Bridge Too Far".¹

During this so-called "Waal Crossing" 48 American soldiers were killed. Atelier Veldwerk (Art Work Veldwerk) created a light monument, called "Lights Crossing"². This lights monument on the new bridge is very special. There are 48 pairs of lamp poles on the bridge, one pair per American soldier killed. At sunset these light poles are lit pair by pair at walking pace. Lighting them all takes nearly 12 minutes. The first pair to be lit, is located under the bridge under the southern arch of the bridge, an upside-down letter V. Every evening at sunset a veteran walks the Sunset March across the bridge from the south side to the north side of the river Waal.

¹ Film by Cornelius Ryan

² Art work by Atelier Veldwerk (Veldwerk Workshop)



Photo 1: De Oversteek at sunset (Photography Jaleesa Derksen)

When the first pair of lamp posts is lit, the veteran starts walking at the pace with which the lights are lit one after the other. When the other side of the river Waal is reached, he or she pauses at the Waal Crossing Monument and salutes in respect.

It is a very special and characteristic phenomenon that more often than not school classes, groups of friends or interested civilians or veterans join in and follow suit after the "Veteran of the Day" and cross the bridge. Officials and managers of national veteran organizations also regularly walk this Sunset March.

On special occasions and on memorial days the Sunset March is often walked by large groups of interested people and participants. Then a horn blower gives the Tattoo signal and wreaths and flowers are placed. Special moments in the course of the year are: 22 February for a German delegation, on 4 and 5 May (Commemoration of the Dead and Liberation Day), Week of the 4-Day Marches, 20 September, 19 October (Sunset March Anniversary) and 11 November (International Veterans Day/Remembrance Day).

As a Veteran of the Day veterans receive a unique, numbered certificate when they have walked their first Sunset March.

Only one veteran can be "Veteran of the Day" on any one day and per day only one numbered certificate is issued, even so when more veterans walk on that day.

Website/Facebook

On the Sunset March website (<http://www.sunsetmarch.nl>) veterans can register to walk the Sunset March. This website can also be browsed to find quite a large number of interesting things, like: objective and procedures, register of veteran walkers, foundation data, walkers' stories, pictures and videos.

Sunset March is also on Facebook. The Facebook page is used for announcements, impressions and comments on (special) Sunset Marches. On LinkedIn there is the Sunset March Group for which LinkedIn members may sign up.

Sunset March Team/Team31

The Sunset March Team (the Board) is a group of 9 people. Amongst them are the 5 "Founding Fathers" and the 3 members of the Daily Management Board. In 2021 a new president of the Sunset March will be initiated. On 22 February 2022 or even on a day earlier he/she will take over the job. The Sunset March Team will take care of coordinating, planning and managing all the activities. It will also safeguard the basic principles of the Sunset March. In case on a given day there is no veteran who has enrolled for a March via the website, a stand-in from either the Team or Team31 will walk the Sunset March that day instead.

Team31 is a group of veterans who are prepared and willing to regularly act as a veteran of the day. This group of "regular walkers" is essential for the daily operation. At present there is a waiting list for people who want to be enrolled to be a member of Team31. The names of the Team31 members can be found on the website. Some special members of Team31 are an American, a French and a Norwegian veteran.

On account of Covid-19 the Crossing was walked without followers during two long lockdown periods. In those periods an extra call upon the members of Team31 was done. As experienced and loyal walkers an extra appeal was made on them to act as Veterans of the Day. In this way other veterans who might have had to travel a long way to get to Nijmegen were able to refrain from making unwanted travel movements. On 15 December last a third period started which will continue into 2021. Team31 fully commits themselves and as expected, it has really done an excellent job. Once again it has become clear that they considerably contribute to the daily activities of the Sunset March.

On Saturday, 18 January, the third Saturday in January, an informal get-together with breakfast was organized for the members of the Sunset Team and Team31 at the Fletcher Hotel Erica in Berg en Dal. Present: 32 of the 40 Sunset March members. The publisher of our book, Mr Fred Lardenoye, of Quo Vadis Publishing Business of Nijmegen, delivered a speech about his activities and his involvement with the veterans. Psychologist Ms Marieke Blocks, formerly with Royal Airforce, coached a teambuilding session. The Nijmegen singer/songwriter Mr Maarten Peters gave an impressive mini concert, which was enthusiastically and emotionally felt by the group. The meeting was rounded off with the customary Question Time and it was concluded with a photo session by our court photographer Ms Jaleesa Derksen.



Photo 2: Maarten Peters' performance during the 18 January meeting. (Photography: Wim van Mierlo)



Photo 3: Photo session at Fletcher Hotel Erica by Jaleesa (Photography: George de Jongh)

3. The 2020 “Veterans of the Day”

From 1 January up to and including 31 December 64 new veterans enrolled as “Veterans of the Day”. A unique certificate is issued to every veteran who walks the Sunset March for the first time. It has a unique number and states his/her name, the Sunset March date of his/her crossing and the time.

It is sent to them by e-mail. On the website the names of all Sunset Marchers and their nationalities are listed in a separate register.

On 1 January 2020 the first “new” veteran who walked the March received certificate number 518. On 31 December the last participant to do so in 2020 received certificate number 581. The veterans who took part for the first time walked nearly 18% of the total number of Sunset Marches in 2020.

4. Appreciation of our President

This year our president, Mr Tim Ruijling, was surprised to be telephoned by the Minister of Defence. It has pleased The King to appoint him Knight of the Order of Orange-Nassau. This token of appreciation reflects on the members of the Sunset March, because it partly emanates from the success of the Sunset March. Furthermore, Mr Jochem van Gelder of Omroep Gelderland (Gelderland Broadcasting Station) appointed him “Golden Gelderlander”.



Photo 4: Medal Ceremony in honour of Tim (Photography: Dirk-Jan van Zuidam)

5. Sunset March Immaterial Heritage

A special moment at the end of 2020. The Sunset March was incorporated in the Netherlands Immaterial Heritage Network.

6. 2020 Activities

Board Meetings

During the past year the Sunset March Board Team convened three times to hold a meeting. These meetings took place on the Saturdays 29 February (at the location of our sponsor Dirksen Opleidingen in Elst), on 18 July (at Tim's house to celebrate his Medal Ceremony) and on 12 December (at the location of our sponsor Dirksen Opleidingen in Elst).

During the 12 December meeting the new president of the Foundation was elected by the Board on the recommendation of a committee created for that purpose. This new president will be initiated for a year, before taking up his duties.

Cooperation

This year the Sunset March activities were again supported by a large number of organisations and institutions. Existing partnerships were continued and consolidated, other ones were revived. Thanks to gifts, sponsorships and donations it was possible to realize all scheduled activities in the course of this year.

Our sponsors and partners are:

- Veterans Institute
- Pro-Intell Security Solutions
- Dirksen Technical Courses
- Jaleesa Derksen Photography
- VFonds (VFund)
- 4-Day Marches Foundation
- Liberation Route Europe
- Military Music of the Armed Forces
- Kersten Retail Elst
- VSI
- Friendship Albany Nijmegen Foundation
- Veldwerk Workshop
- Fletcher Hotels Berg en Dal
- BAM Infra
- Armed Forces Medical Regiment
- 11th Air Mobile Brigade
- 82nd Airborne Division
- Honorary Consul in Cleves, Germany
- And many Nijmegen Municipality departments
- Gabe van der Zwaag

Special Sunset Marches

Every day at another time, depending on the sunset time, 366 Sunset Marches were held in 2020. During two rather long periods, one of which is still going on, there were no followers. The special Sunset Marches had a very sober and subdued atmosphere and the number of participants was lower than usual. Some memorable Sunset Marches in 2020 with special participants were:

- ✓ On 22 February a German delegation from the Cleves region, walked the Sunset March, which has meanwhile become a good tradition.
- ✓ Participants were some local officials from Cleves, the Honorary Consul Mr Freddy Heinzl and German and international soldiers. Lieutenant-General Klaus Habersetzer, Deputy Commander of the German Luftwaffe (Airforces) was also present. Earlier that day a wreath was laid at the monument commemorating the Nijmegen bombardment victims.



Photo 5: Sunset March by German delegation led by Lieutenant-General Klaus Habersetzer from the Cleves region as Veteran of the Day (Photography: Wim van Mierlo)

- ✓ Since a couple of years 11 July has been reserved for Dutchbat veterans led by Colonel of the Hunters Ludy de Vos, in commemoration of the Fall of Srebrenica. It also took place this year. The large number of participants clearly demonstrates that this event still lives on in people's minds after 25 years.



Photo 6: Sunset March by Dutchbat I, II, III and IV members (Photography: Wim van Mierlo)

- ✓ On 24 August the DVBA (Dutch Veterans Bikers Association) also marched the bridge by tradition.



Photo 7: DVBA (Photography: Mark Schindeler)

- ✓ On 20 September, the Waal Crossing Anniversary, a small delegation of the American Embassy walked the Sunset March, together with the Sunset March Board. It stands to reason that the prevailing corona measures were observed. Larger groups of participants, even our own Team31 was not allowed to attend. The traditional "honorary couloir" was cancelled in 2020 as well.
- ✓ On 19 October 2020 the Sunset March had its 6-year anniversary. On that day Mr Henk Hanenburg walked the Sunset March in the name of the Board. In order to celebrate this anniversary Mr Tim Ruijling was waiting for him at the Monument and together they toasted to the anniversary (at the governmentally required distance from each other). The other board members toasted online.

Other events

- ✓ 18 January: "Third Saturday of January". The annual group breakfast for Team and Team31 was held in Fletcher Hotel Erica in Berg en Dal. A description of this meeting can be found in the Team Sunset March/Team31 section.
- ✓ 4 February: Le Figaro journalist, French Team31 member: interview and escorted by Team secretary.
- ✓ 4 May: Special Commemoration of the Dead in Cleves at the Consulate. People present were: Honorary Consul, the German general Mr Klaus Habersetzer and a delegation from the International NATO Headquarters.
- ✓ December. The VFonds book 75 Years of Freedom in Pictures by Sacha de Boer was published. Extensive reports of the Waal Crossing Memorial Event in 2019 and the Special Sunset March of 21 September 2019.

7. 2020 Finances

The Sunset March Foundation has got a number of fixed annual costs. They are especially the costs for the domain name and the website, keeping a specific bank account for the ANBI status, flowers and wreaths for commemorations, team activities and promotional projects. The other costs are varying and they are adjusted and defined annually by the Board.

The Foundation closed the year 2020 financially healthy. In addition to a fixed annual amount in sponsorship money by our partner ProIntell Security Solutions and the material support by the Nijmegen Municipality, substantial support was offered by the Veteranen Instituut (Veterans Institute). We also received a number of small donations, mostly from private people. Our participation in the so-called Clubkas Campaign of the RABO-bank (Club Fund) resulted in a contribution to our own treasury.

8. 2021 Prospects

It is important to get to know in how far the circumstances can be regarded as "normal" again. Covid-19 does have an impact on the fringe events and additional issues, but the basis – 48 light poles and the salute – will remain unchanged. Depending on how conditions will develop, we now venture to state our plans for the future:

- ✓ 365 Sunset Marches.
- ✓ Until 19 January definitely "Corona-proof".
- ✓ 16 January: The Annual Team31 Day on the "third Saturday in January" was cancelled on account of Covid-19. We hope to be able to fix a new date for this event, probably in April.
- ✓ 22 February: annual participation of a German/Dutch delegation.
- ✓ 11 April: Radboud University in commemoration of the University closure of 1943.
- ✓ Participation of a 4-Day Marches detachment of international veterans on the Monday preceding the Nijmegen 4-Day Marches.
- ✓ 4 and 5 May. Receiving the Liberation Flame and informal Commemoration of the Dead; with German participation; Relay Run to Cleves, Germany by a large group of runners.
- ✓ 11 July: annual Dutchbat participation on the Day of the Srebrenica Fall.
- ✓ 22 Augustus: Sunset March 2500.
- ✓ 24 August: Annual participation of the DVBA
- ✓ 20 September: Waal Crossing Commemoration Day.
- ✓ 19 October: 7th Sunset March Anniversary.
- ✓ 11 November: International Veterans Day
- ✓ 18 November: Air Forces Peace Mission Veterans



Photo 8: "De Oversteek"(The Crossing) after sunset (Photography: Jaleesa Derksen)